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Report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 1828 (2008) of 31 July 2008, by which the Council requested me to report every 60 days on developments on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the political process, the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, and all parties' compliance with their international obligations. The report covers the months of August and September 2008 and provides an update on developments which occurred in early October 2008.

II. Developments relating to UNAMID

2. As at 10 October 2008, the total strength of UNAMID uniformed personnel was 10,527, including 8,579 military personnel (8,142 troops, 285 staff officers, 113 military observers and 29 liaison officers), and 1,948 police personnel (1,808 individual police officers and one formed police unit of 140 personnel).

3. Recruitment of civilian staff stood at 2,564 of 5,557 authorized posts, or 46 per cent of full capacity. This figure is comprised of 654 international staff, 1,704 national staff and 215 United Nations Volunteers. In addition, there are 42 staff on short-term temporary assignments from other missions deployed to UNAMID. Meanwhile, 153 international civilian staff and 29 United Nations Volunteers have been selected and are on travel status.

III. Deployment of UNAMID

4. During the reporting period, the 190-member advance party of the first Ethiopian battalion arrived in Kulbus on 16 August, accompanied by a force protection company of 170 personnel. Preparations for establishment of the Nigerian Level II Hospital in Sector West began with the deployment of 96 personnel to El Geneina on 13 September. On 15 September, the advance component of 72 drivers and 4 officers from the first Egyptian battalion arrived in Um Kadada, where the battalion will be located. These Egyptian personnel subsequently flew to El Obeid and moved their contingent-owned equipment, through "self-drive", from

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El Obeid to Um Kadada on 22 September. A rotation of the 196-member Gambian defence company located at UNAMID Force Headquarters in El Fasher was also completed on 2 August.

5. Over the course of the remainder of the year, a considerable number of military units, as well as two formed police units, will be deployed to Darfur. The units expected to deploy in October will include the 348-strong main body of the Bangladeshi multi-role logistics company, 148 members of the Egyptian Transport Unit, the 40-personnel advance party of the Pakistani engineer company, and the main bodies of the first Ethiopian and Egyptian battalions (with 440 and 632 personnel, respectively). Deployment of formed police units from Nepal and Indonesia is also expected to be completed in October.

6. In addition, the 10 infantry battalions already deployed to Darfur will commence their rotations in October (four each from Nigeria and Rwanda, one from Senegal and one from South Africa). These troop-contributing countries continue to work towards bringing these units to United Nations standard strength of 800 personnel and ensuring that they are deployed with the required equipment. This would result in an increase of 1,468 troops.

7. Thus far, Rwanda has informed the United Nations that the strengthened and upgraded battalions are ready to deploy and that all necessary equipment has been acquired, with the exception of armoured personnel carriers, which have been procured and are scheduled to begin arriving in Rwanda in November. In accordance with standard practice, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support subsequently dispatched staff to Rwanda for a predeployment visit, which will provide final confirmation of readiness to deploy. Although the visit had not been completed at the time of drafting, it is expected that a positive report will result from the assessment team in the movement of these troops and their equipment to Darfur by airlift in the coming weeks, with the assistance of the United States of America, under the auspices of the Friends of UNAMID.

8. Preparations are also under way for the deployment of additional units in November and December. These troops will include the Pakistani Level III Hospital and its 156 personnel, the 289-strong main body of the Pakistani engineering company, the 150-member Bangladeshi Sector Reserve Company, and 545 Ethiopian troops (the 125-member Transport Unit, the 120-member Sector Reconnaissance Company, and the 300-strong Multi-role Logistics Unit). It is also expected that the Egyptian formed police unit will deploy at the end of 2008.

9. This would amount to 4,216 new troops being deployed by December 2008, for a total of 12,795 military personnel (presuming that the infantry battalions already on the ground rotate at the United Nations strength). In addition, the remainder of the year will see an increase in the deployment of police with three formed police units (of 140 officers each). Taken together, these deployments will bring the total of UNAMID military and police personnel to 14,823, or 60 per cent of the total authorized strength by the end of 2008.

10. The Council will note that the conditions required to achieve 80 per cent deployment of UNAMID by the end of 2008 included a major increase in the flow of contingent-owned equipment into Darfur, and a significant enhancement of the engineering capabilities required to prepare for the arrival of incoming units and

personnel. While concerted action continues in both of these areas, recent developments have made it clear that the originally envisaged target of 80 per cent will more likely be achieved only by the end of March 2009.

11. One of the main challenges to UNAMID deployment, and specifically the movement of contingent-owned equipment into Darfur, is the 1,400-mile supply line between Port Sudan and Darfur. The local capacity for ground transportation is limited; there are only a few local contractors available, which caters to UNAMID and other United Nations system agencies and humanitarian organizations, and the cash-based payment system in Darfur has required the United Nations to change its financial transaction procedures. In addition, the environment of heightened insecurity had a direct impact on UNAMID efforts to move contingent-owned equipment into Darfur. Concerned with safety, some local contractors refused to transport UNAMID assets or sought to reduce financial risk by allocating ill-maintained vehicles and inexperienced drivers to these duties, particularly for the drive between the United Nations logistics base in El Obeid and Darfur. This contributed to the slow movement of contingent-owned equipment into Darfur.

12. The land transportation of heavy equipment (e.g., medical and engineering material) is particularly problematic for other reasons, intrinsic to Darfur. Rains in August and September made the southern route from El Obeid to Nyala impassable for those months. During that period, UNAMID was able to move three convoys involving 165 vehicles through the northern route between El Obeid and El Fasher. One of the convoys led by UNAMID police with the Government force protection took eight days to complete the 800-km journey from El Obeid to El Fasher, as low-bed trucks carrying heavy equipment were too wide for the deep, sandy, unpaved desert trails, and releasing a vehicle stuck on the road took as long as 24 hours. The 40-vehicle convoy was further delayed when it was joined at the Kordofan-Darfur border by more than 100 World Food Programme (WFP) trucks, which had stood idle for three weeks, reportedly owing to the lack of escorts.

13. Despite these difficulties, movement by road continues to be the most important means of transporting equipment into Darfur. Detailed analysis shows that it is the most cost-effective means for moving a high volume of heavy material into the area of operations — assuming that sufficient trucking capacity is available and route security is assured. In this context, new commercial contracts for road movements have been put in place and the Government agreed to provide security escorts for UNAMID road convoys as frequently as every 48 hours, with the expectation that convoys would take place every 24 hours in due course. In addition, with the end of the rainy season, both the northern and southern routes from El Obeid to Nyala will be utilized, which will result in an increase in the volume of movement.

14. To further improve the main supply routes between Port Sudan to Darfur, UNAMID has put in place additional commercial contracts for road, rail, and air transportation of contingent-owned and United Nations-owned equipment directly into Darfur. Both the Department of Field Support and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are also working with the Friends of UNAMID to make arrangements for the airlift of troops and contingent-owned equipment directly from troop-contributing countries into Darfur — as will be the case for the Rwandan troops. In addition, selected troop and police contributors have been requested to undertake either self-deployment of all contingent-owned equipment and personnel

if they are in the region, or the direct airlift of such equipment from the port of origin to Darfur.

15. Expediting the direct airlift of contingent-owned equipment from troop- and police-contributing countries to Darfur would require that the Government provide blanket clearance for flights arriving in the Sudan, to avoid the prohibitively time-consuming requirement to clear the cargo of each flight individually. This is particularly important, since most major airlift operations involve a large number of aircraft. In a welcome development, the Government of the Sudan agreed, in a 26 September letter, to provide blanket clearance for airlift operations, in response to a request from the Department of Field Support. The blanket clearance arrangement will first be applied to airlift the contingent-owned equipment for the Pakistani Level III Hospital, which will be flown into Darfur in two phases in time for the hospital to be operational before the end of the year.

16. Nevertheless, clearing the backlog at El Obeid will likely take up to six months. Rail transportation of UNAMID assets, while providing an alternative, is limited in capacity: the railroad has a single track from El Obeid to Nyala, and it takes four weeks to move 50-60 containers from Port Sudan to Nyala. It is also necessary to augment the reception capacity of airports in Darfur, including the expansion of apron space and deployment of material handling equipment, to be able to support a sustained increase in the airlifting of contingent-owned equipment.

17. In addition to movement of contingent-owned and other equipment, improving the UNAMID engineering capability remains the second major condition for accelerating deployment. To that end, plans were put in place to accelerate the deployment of UNAMID engineering units (from China, Egypt and Pakistan), the transfer of some military engineering capacity from the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and finally to include a light field engineering capability as part of the deployment of all new battalions. As described below, after a period of planning and approvals from the troop-contributing countries, these initiatives are only now being put in place.

18. Among the three UNAMID engineering units, the Chinese engineers are fully deployed and operational. The Egyptian engineering unit is deployed, though not yet operational, since it is focusing on repair of damaged contingent-owned equipment. With regard to the engineering unit from Pakistan, an advance team of six is in place in El Geneina, preparing for the arrival of contingent-owned equipment and personnel, which will be completed by the end of the year. Meanwhile, the temporary transfer to UNAMID of 90 soldiers from the Chinese engineering unit in UNMIS is due to commence as soon as formal arrangements are finalized. Finally, the deployment of light field engineering capabilities as elements within arriving battalions is likely to begin in early 2009, taking into account the time required to finalize preparations for the deployment of these units. Efforts continue to deploy all of these engineering capabilities as a high priority.

19. With respect to commercial engineering resources, UNAMID has identified a number of arrangements to augment its capacity for camp construction, maintenance, expansion, and other critical engineering tasks. The mission will place greater emphasis on local and regional vendors. In that context, UNAMID has carried out a vendor conference in Nyala to encourage the participation of local firms in UNAMID tenders. UNAMID has also initiated internal capacity-building, especially in the areas of contract management. In addition, the mission, in close

collaboration with the Department of Field Support, is finalizing a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Office for Project Services and putting in place a contract for project management of engineering works, which is to be concluded in the coming months. These efforts do not preclude the possibility of having to mobilize additional external resources, given the scope of engineering requirements anticipated for UNAMID deployment and operations.

20. As for units expected to deploy in 2009, the Sudanese authorities confirmed, in writing, their acceptance of the Thai battalion and the Nepalese units in the progress report submitted by the Government of National Unity to the African Union Commission on 17 September, which I transmitted to the Security Council on 18 September. Anticipating that these troop-contributing countries will agree to take the deployment forward, we will work with them to have these units deployed as soon as possible and most likely in early 2009.

21. Efforts are also continuing to confirm the readiness of agreed police-contributing countries to deploy formed police units. To that end, representatives from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the African Union and donor countries visited Burkina Faso, Mali, Uganda, and Togo at the end of July. A similar predeployment mission also visited Senegal. Some of these police-contributing countries will be in a position to deploy formed police units in early 2009, while others are in the process of procuring requisite equipment.

IV. Tripartite mechanism for the deployment of UNAMID

22. As part of United Nations efforts to expedite the deployment of UNAMID, Susana Malcorra, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, travelled to Khartoum for a tripartite meeting on 7 October, at which the Government, the African Union Commission and the United Nations discussed the logistical challenges facing UNAMID deployment and the steps being taken by each of the three parties to ensure expeditious deployment and effective functioning of the mission. A number of critical issues were discussed in detail and courses of action for all three parties agreed, as described below.

Freedom of movement

23. **White helicopters.** To ensure that UNAMID helicopters, as well as those being used for international humanitarian activities in Darfur, are clearly distinguishable, the Government has instructed the armed forces and the civil aviation authorities to ensure that Government helicopters are no longer painted white and are distinct from those used by international actors.

24. **Helicopter crash investigation of 29 September in Nyala (see para. 46).** It was agreed that UNAMID and the International Civil Aviation Authority would contribute to the review of the 29 September crash of the helicopter operated by a UNAMID contractor.

25. **Threat notification.** The Government will continue to share information with UNAMID relating to security threats — without prejudice to UNAMID operations.

Air operations

26. **Rehabilitation of airports.** The Government gave its unequivocal approval for the rehabilitation of El Fasher and Nyala airports and the new airport in El Geneina which would be upgraded so as to accommodate AN-124-type aircrafts. The United Nations committed to taking forward these efforts as expeditiously as possible.

27. **Times of use of Darfur airports.** The Government confirmed its approval for use of Darfur airports by UNAMID from 0700 hours to 1900 hours and confirmed that instructions to this effect had been circulated to Civil Aviation and National Security authorities as well as the Walis in Darfur.

28. **Around-the-clock operations.** It was further agreed that 24/7 operations would be gradually implemented and that UNAMID would contribute the necessary equipment and support.

Flight clearances

29. **Blanket clearance.** The Government agreed that blanket clearance would be granted for flights carrying contingent-owned equipment and other UNAMID materials into Darfur. One "Form 1" would be completed for each phase of such an airlift operation. Equipment would then be subtracted from the single "Form 1" as it arrived in the Sudan until the airlift is completed.

Convoy protection and support

30. **Government escort (from El Obeid to Darfur).** The Government confirmed its commitment to escort any UNAMID convoys as frequently as every 48 hours. It was further agreed that the frequency of convoys would be increased to one every 24 hours so long as convoys were comprised of 30 vehicles or more. It was further agreed that the frequency of convoys would be increased to one every 24 hours in due course.

Railway

31. **United Nations support.** The United Nations agreed to support the efforts of the Government of the Sudan to rehabilitate portions of the railway to the extent possible.

Visa processing

32. **Government facilitation of visas.** The Government reiterated its commitment to continue expediting the processing of visas for UNAMID personnel and stated that a Government focal point would be appointed in this regard.

Customs clearance

33. **Single clearance at point of entry.** The Government agreed that UNAMID equipment, goods and materials would undergo Customs clearance at one time only, which would be at their point of entry and would be undertaken simultaneously by Customs, National Intelligence and National Security officials.

Government liaison

34. **El Fasher Office.** The Government confirmed the establishment of a liaison office in El Fasher to be led by a Major General. The Office would ensure local implementation of decisions taken at a national level. Liaison at the sector level is anticipated.

Military deployments

35. **Self-deployment of selected units.** The United Nations, the African Union and the Government agreed to support the possible self-deployment of the second battalions from Egypt and Ethiopia.

Local construction capacity

36. **Utilizing local and regional capacities.** The United Nations undertook to use local and regional contractors and vendors to the fullest extent possible. It was noted, however, that requirements were so vast that resources from outside the region may need to be mobilized.

37. In concluding the meeting, the Government, African Union and United Nations delegations agreed on the importance of convening tripartite meetings on a regular basis in order to monitor the implementation of all agreed actions and to maintain momentum with regard to the deployment of UNAMID. Particular emphasis was given to the rapid implementation at all levels of the decisions taken.

38. In this regard, it was agreed that the next tripartite meeting on UNAMID would take place within four to six weeks in Khartoum and that the agenda would be developed in advance by UNAMID.

V. UNAMID operations

39. Darfur has been designated a Phase IV security area since 23 July 2008, as a result of a serious deterioration in the security situation over the last four months. That violence had included high levels of banditry, occasional military engagements, ethnic clashes and deadly attacks on UNAMID forces on 8 July, which resulted in the deaths of five peacekeepers, and on 6 October in Southern Darfur, in which one peacekeeper was killed. In accordance with the Phase IV provision to relocate non-essential staff, 141 civilian staff and 174 individual police officers had to be relocated out of Darfur, and the deployment of 400 individual police offers was postponed. While the relocated staff subsequently returned to Darfur, the ceiling on the number of staff allowed in the mission area remains in effect.

40. Nevertheless, UNAMID conducted 1,044 confidence-building patrols, 218 escort patrols, and 30 investigation patrols during the reporting period, with a particular emphasis on facilitating humanitarian access and providing convoy protection. UNAMID police advisers also conducted monitoring, confidence-building and firewood patrols, visiting community policing centres and Government police stations throughout Darfur. After the 25 August shooting in Kalma camp for internally displaced persons, UNAMID police established a 24/7 presence there, composed of two shifts per day, each with 30 members of the Bangladeshi formed police unit and 30 individual police officers. UNAMID also intensified patrols

around Zam Zam camp for internally displaced persons after the Government-affiliated Central Police Reserve looted and burned a market near the camp on 10 September, seriously injuring seven people.

41. During the reporting period, UNAMID, in collaboration with a number of United Nations funds and programmes, conducted a series of training and capacity-building workshops for 119 members of rebel police forces, 90 sheikhs and *umdas* (tribal elders) and 295 internally displaced persons on the subjects of human rights, gender, and community-policing. Those who have received training participate in UNAMID police patrols within their own communities or camps. Women in camps for internally displaced persons also received training by gender advisers within the UNAMID police component in regard to income-generation activities, gender-based violence, and health.

42. UNAMID continued to monitor human rights violations, engage local authorities and other stakeholders, and provide technical assistance. On 30 August, UNAMID organized a workshop in cooperation with the Advisory Council for Human Rights and the Judicial Organ of Southern Darfur on fair trial standards for judges and lawyers.

43. UNAMID Civil Affairs continued to engage civil society and women's groups, the local administration, the academic community, and other segments of the Darfur society on the peace process and local conflict resolution initiatives. UNAMID convened workshops and training to build the capacity of the Darfur civil society groups to play an active role in grass-roots peacebuilding, development, and the rule of law. In addition, 32 quick-impact projects have been approved, 6 of which are being implemented.

44. Throughout the reporting period, the mission's freedom of movement was undermined repeatedly by restrictions imposed by the Government and the movements. On 11 August, a UNAMID military officer was briefly detained by the Military Intelligence for not stopping at a Government of the Sudan checkpoint near the UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher. On 16 August, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) detained several United Nations staff members and crew members of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service for several hours after they landed in Abu Suruj (50 km north of El Geneina), allegedly ahead of schedule. SAF has threatened to shoot down United Nations aircraft that do not comply with flight timetables and suspended United Nations air operations around Abu Suruj until further notice, citing the presence of SAF checkpoints in the area. In Southern Darfur, the National Intelligence and Security Services interrupted UNAMID night patrols, claiming that such patrols were neither required nor acceptable in Nyala. The Government authorities subsequently agreed to allow UNAMID patrols as long as they were notified in advance.

45. On 19 August, a UNAMID patrol to Mado village (60 km north-west of Kutum) was denied access by the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)-Minni Minawi faction, which demanded that UNAMID seek the group's permission before approaching the village and contacting civilians in the area. On 25 August, a UNAMID rescue convoy to Kalma camp for internally displaced persons was stopped at a Government of the Sudan checkpoint for four hours, while the Government of the Sudan officers demanded an authorization letter from the National Intelligence and Security Services for UNAMID to proceed to the camp. On 31 August, a UNAMID patrol en route from Kabkabiya to El Fasher was halted

by members of the SLA-Abdul Wahid faction, who demanded to be notified of UNAMID movements in areas of their control. On 2 September, a UNAMID patrol escorting a fuel tank from Kabkabiya to El Fasher was delayed at two different locations by the SLA-Abdul Wahid faction and an Arab militia group. In a separate incident on 23 September, an *umdah* of Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced persons stopped UNAMID from patrolling in the area, demanding a more proactive approach from the mission to resolve insecurity and the deteriorating conditions in the camp.

46. UNAMID air operations came under fire four times during the reporting period. On 11 August, a UNAMID helicopter with one passenger and four crewmembers was shot at while flying from El Geneina to Kulbus and sustained minor damage. On the same day, a UNAMID helicopter came under fire 3 km south of Jebel Moon while on an assessment mission to alleged bombing sites. The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) apologized for the second incident, acknowledging to have mistakenly identified the white helicopter as a Government aircraft. On 14 September, a UNAMID helicopter carrying 12 passengers and 4 crewmembers was fired upon by unknown perpetrators while on flight from Shangil Tobayi to Tawilla, resulting in a fuel leak. On 17 September, a UNAMID helicopter on an assessment mission to Birmaza was shot at but able to fly back to El Fasher with no damage; no one has claimed responsibility for the incident, which is under investigation. In another tragic incident, a helicopter operated by a UNAMID contractor crashed near Nyala on 29 September, resulting in the death of all four individuals on board.

47. During the reporting period, banditry also continued to disrupt UNAMID operations. On 12 August, several UNAMID police advisers were robbed of their mobile telephones and radio at gunpoint in Dorti camp for internally displaced persons. On 31 August, another UNAMID patrol from Khor Abeche to Nyala was attacked by armed bandits; the patrol returned fire and was able to avert the ambush. On three separate occasions, on 9, 11, and 13 September, UNAMID vehicles were carjacked by armed individuals in Nyala. Banditry also continues to impede the operations of the United Nations country team and humanitarian community.

VI. Political process

48. The newly appointed African Union-United Nations Joint Chief Mediator for Darfur, Mr. Djibrill Bassolé, arrived in the Sudan on 25 August. Mr. Bassolé made initial contacts with senior Government of the Sudan representatives in Khartoum and Juba, as well as state Government officials in the three Darfur states. The Government of the Sudan pledged to cooperate with the Joint Chief Mediator and expressed its determination to seek a speedy political solution to the crisis in Darfur. Mr. Bassolé also met with representatives of rebel movements, internally displaced persons, tribal leaders, and non-governmental organizations in El Fasher, Nyala and El Geneina.

49. In these consultations, Mr. Bassolé highlighted the need for a Sudanese-driven solution and urged the parties to lay down their arms and engage sincerely in dialogue. Mr. Bassolé urged the Government to take forward the multi-party Sudan People's Initiative announced in July, and expressed his hope that the Initiative would provide a concrete basis for dialogue with the rebel movements. Mr. Bassolé

also discussed with the Government of the Sudan the possibility of a number of immediate actions to improve conditions on the ground and kick-start the political process. Those issues were described in a letter, which Mr. Bassolé sent to the Government on 16 September 2008.

50. Mr. Bassolé also met with the leaders of a number of rebel groups in order to take stock of their positions and demands, and discussed with them concrete measures to improve security on the ground and resume peace talks with the Government of the Sudan. Movement representatives as well as internally displaced persons and tribal leaders reiterated their demands for power-sharing and security. They stressed their concern over the issue of land, in addition to the issues of a Darfur region, Darfur's representation in the Presidency of the Sudan, rehabilitation of villages, voluntary return of internally displaced persons, justice and accountability, and compensation/restitution.

51. While the most urgent priority is security and achieving a complete ceasefire, it is clear that this cannot be accomplished in the absence of a political process and a framework agreement. The framework agreement would confirm the principles that should guide the search for a political solution, and foreshadow the main demands of the parties, including the complete cessation of hostilities. In the weeks ahead, and in anticipation of the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties to be hosted in Doha by the Government of Qatar, the mediation will engage the Government and the movements with a view to reaching agreement on such a framework.

52. There were other welcome signs of dialogue and reconciliation during the reporting period. On 12 September 2008, the Contact Group for the Dakar Agreement met in Asmara, in the course of which the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Sudan and Chad was announced. The parties further agreed to exchange Ambassadors before the sixth meeting of the Contact Group to be held in N'Djamena.

53. On 19 September, Vice-President Osman Taha and Minni Minawi, one of the Darfur Peace Agreement signatories, met in El Fasher. UNAMID facilitated the meeting. They agreed upon a cessation of hostilities and reaffirmed their commitment to the Darfur Peace Agreement.

VII. Security and humanitarian situation

54. The security and humanitarian situation remained precarious during the reporting period, especially in Northern Darfur and in camps for internally displaced persons. On 12 August, the SLA-Abdul Wahid faction reported a Government offensive in the Wadi Atrun area of Northern Kordofan, near the border with the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, allegedly resulting in seven deaths. The Government, while acknowledging the deployment of its forces to the area, asserted that no fighting had occurred. On 16 August 2008, the SLA-Abdul Wahid faction again reported a Government attack on rebel bases in Abu Hamra and Kafod east of Kutum, allegedly resulting in the death of two combatants.

55. On 25 August, heavily armed Government security forces surrounded Kalma camp, one of the largest camps for internally displaced persons accommodating approximately 80,000 people south of Nyala, with approximately 60 vehicles. The

Government launched this operation to initiate a search of the camp for weapons and other contraband. Confronted by a crowd of internally displaced persons, the Government of the Sudan security forces opened fire. In the ensuing skirmish between the security forces and some internally displaced persons, which continued for several hours, 33 internally displaced persons were killed and 108 were injured, including 38 children and 25 women. UNAMID deployed a team composed of military, police, and medical personnel, which after a considerable delay at one of the Government checkpoints, arrived in the camp and evacuated the wounded to a medical facility in Nyala. The Government reported that one military personnel was killed and 14 were injured among its security forces.

56. Following the incident, 18 Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) officials in the Government of National Unity and four local legislators, including members of the Southern Darfur Council, resigned from their posts in protest. UNAMID took up the incident with Government agencies, including the National Intelligence and Security Services, the Ministries of Defence, Interior, and Foreign Affairs, as well as the Humanitarian Aid Commission, and on 10 September, the Government announced the establishment of a ministerial-level Security Task Force on Darfur to improve the humanitarian and security situation in camps for internally displaced persons. The Government requested the participation of UNAMID and of the United Nations Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator in the task force.

57. In the meantime, the Government initiated a new military campaign in Northern Darfur. On 6 and 7 September, the Government launched air strikes followed by ground operations north of Kutum and east of Jebel Marra, respectively, involving Mi-26 attack helicopters and 50 to 100 vehicles. The Government reported that these operations were an effort to secure the main convoy routes for humanitarian access. Nevertheless, Government forces engaged SLA-Unity, SLA-Abdul Wahid, and the United Resistance Front (JEM Collective) groups in combat, which reportedly resulted in a significant number of casualties on both sides. On 13 and 14 September, combined SAF, militia, and the Central Reserve Police forces of up to 150 vehicles launched another major offensive into eastern Jebel Marra. During September, the Government also bombed a number of suspected rebel strongholds, including at Karbala, Jebel Adoula, and the Umo and Jebel Moon areas, reportedly resulting in 12 deaths, including five women and two children.

58. North of El Fasher, clashes between the SLA-Minni Minawi and the SLA-Free Wing factions, both signatories of the Darfur Peace Agreement, continued. Tribal conflict also dominated the security situation in Southern Darfur, with up to 150 casualties reported already in the past two months as a result of fighting between the Rezeigat and Messerayah tribes in the area of Abu Jabra.

59. During the reporting period, UNAMID documented 16 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual assault, against women and children from camps for internally displaced persons. In five of the reported cases, perpetrators were described as individuals in military uniform. The local government in Northern Darfur established a new family and child protection unit through which women, children, and families affected by gender-based violence could report crimes such as rape and domestic violence.

60. Military operations and banditry have undermined the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Since January 2008, more than 230,000 civilians have been forced to flee violence, at a rate of nearly 1,000 per day. Many of them have fled to

overcrowded camps near large towns or in some cases sought shelter in the desert until clashes subsided. As attacks on humanitarian agencies also continued to climb, incidents of violence against aid workers in the first eight months of 2008 have already surpassed the total records in 2007. So far this year, 208 humanitarian vehicles have been hijacked, 155 aid workers abducted (43 WFP-contracted drivers remain unaccounted for), and 123 premises broken into. Because of this targeted violence, two major non-governmental organizations assisting more than 500,000 civilians in Northern Darfur alone were forced to suspend their activities during the reporting period.

61. Darfur has also been affected by the global food crisis, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reporting that the price of staple food items has increased by up to 150 per cent against the same period last year. With crop failures in many important agricultural areas of the region, the reliance upon relief assistance in 2008 is perhaps at its greatest, at a time when humanitarian access is critically limited. Owing to the volatility of the security situation on the ground, humanitarian organizations had to reduce staff presence and mobility throughout Darfur, which resulted in a significant reduction in their ability to deliver humanitarian aid and implement other critical functions, including development-oriented activities.

VIII. Compliance with international obligations

62. Some progress has been made on the follow-up to the joint communiqué of 20 June 2008 on the facilitation of humanitarian activities in Darfur. In July, a Tripartite Joint Technical Committee held training workshops on the General Directory of Procedures for representatives of the Government and non-governmental organizations in Nyala and El Fasher. The high-level committee established by the joint communiqué met on 20 August 2008 and reaffirmed the imperative to continue to deliver services in accordance with humanitarian principles.

63. Despite such an assurance from the Government to facilitate humanitarian access, the Sudanese authorities at the local level continued to impose bureaucratic constraints on humanitarian organizations. In Southern Darfur, the Humanitarian Aid Commission reduced fuel supply for operating water pumps in Kalma camp after an allegation was made that fuel had been used by armed groups. Consequently, approximately 100,000 internally displaced persons suffered from water shortages. On 27 August, the National Intelligence and Security Services detained and beat two pilots operating WFP helicopters, while holding the passengers on the aircraft at gunpoint in Golo, Northern Darfur.

64. Additional procedures have been put in place for transportation of medical supplies into Darfur. Humanitarian organizations are now required to seek authorization when travelling on rented vehicles, which has become an increasingly common practice to avert carjacking. In another development, Government customs authorities have not provided clearance for 5,000 metric tons of sugar held at Port the Sudan for four months. While WFP was able in August to increase the caloric content of the food basket to 75 per cent of the normal value, it has warned of the possible suspension of food delivery in some areas of Darfur, should security conditions not improve.

65. On 6 August, the Sudanese Minister of Justice announced the appointment of a Special Prosecutor for Darfur, with a mandate to investigate crimes committed in Darfur since 2003. The Special Prosecutor has announced his intent to investigate alleged crimes committed in Wadi Saleh, Western Darfur, in 2003, in addition to completing the work of the National Commission of Inquiry. That Commission was established by a Presidential Decree in May 2004 to investigate human rights violations committed by armed groups in Darfur in 2004.

66. In the meantime, arbitrary arrest and detention of persons accused of involvement in the rebel movements, and in some cases their relatives, continued during the reporting period. The practice of torture and ill-treatment against detainees in the National Intelligence and Security Services custody has been reported.

IX. Observations

67. More than a year after the Security Council authorized the deployment of UNAMID under resolution 1769 (2007), conditions required for an effective peacekeeping operation remain absent in Darfur. The Government and the parties continue to pursue a military solution to the conflict, while little progress has been made in the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement. As violence prevails, the protection of civilians remains a grave concern.

68. Seeking a solution to the crisis in Darfur, as a matter of utmost urgency, continues to be one of the top priorities of the United Nations. In the meantime, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Alain Le Roy, travelled to Darfur from 8 to 11 October as part of an extensive visit to the Sudan.

69. During his visit to each of the three Darfur states, and throughout his discussions with senior Government officials in Khartoum, Under-Secretary-General Le Roy reiterated the United Nations commitment to deploying UNAMID military and police components as expeditiously as possible. This would allow the mission to continue to increase its impact, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians and facilitation of humanitarian assistance. The visit also provided an opportunity to confirm that a lasting solution to the crisis could only come through a political settlement and that the arrival of Joint Chief Mediator Bassolé provides an opportunity to revitalize the political process.

70. Since his arrival in the Sudan on 25 August, Mr. Bassolé has held productive consultations with local, national, and regional interlocutors. As he works with the parties to bring them towards direct negotiations, I welcome initiatives to support his work, including Qatar's offer to host peace talks. It is critical for the international community to be united in supporting his efforts.

71. Dialogue also requires security on the ground. To that end, as the sovereign power, the Government of the Sudan has the responsibility to put an end to aerial bombardments and military offensives, which could harm civilians, and to take concrete steps towards the disarmament of militia and other Government-affiliated forces. I welcome the assurances given by the Government to Under-Secretary-General Le Roy that it would not initiate further military action, without prejudice to its right to respond to aggression.

72. In addition, I call on the Government to comply with its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians. In that regard, the 25 August incident at Kalma camp was deeply regrettable.

73. I also call on all rebel groups to commit to an immediate cessation of hostilities, begin serious negotiations with the Government, and fully cooperate with UNAMID, removing any obstacles to its operations. I count on countries in the region and with influence on the Government and the movements to do their utmost to facilitate a ceasefire and the resumption of talks.

74. UNAMID, despite its broad mandate for the protection of civilians and assistance to peace implementation, is not designed to create a sustainable solution to the Darfur crisis. That is the responsibility of the parties to the conflict. As I have said many times, the effectiveness of a peacekeeping operation is largely contingent upon the commitment of the parties to the peace process, without which peacekeepers can be vulnerable themselves.

75. In Darfur, UNAMID has increasingly become the target of banditry and armed attacks. UNAMID thus faces divergent requirements, that is, to deploy rapidly, enabling it to increase its ability to protect civilians and facilitate provision of humanitarian assistance, while also taking all measures to reduce risk to its own personnel. Reinforcements are slowly arriving, but the security situation and difficult environment in Darfur have delayed the arrival of equipment for incoming contingents. While there are no quick solutions to these deployment challenges, the United Nations continues to make every effort to speed up the establishment of UNAMID.

76. Meanwhile, the volatility of the security situation on the ground and the difficulty in bringing equipment and basic supplies into Darfur have exposed UNAMID military and police personnel to increased risks. They often undertake patrols and provide force protection escorts without adequate communication and transportation assets. UNAMID civilian personnel also work and live in an extremely unsafe environment. A security assessment team from United Nations Headquarters visited Darfur and Khartoum from 30 September to 10 October and is currently finalizing recommendations for urgent action to be taken in order to improve the safety and security conditions for the mission personnel.

77. The effectiveness of UNAMID hinges on the Government's cooperation to ensure its freedom of movement in compliance with the Status-of-Forces Agreement; provide customs clearance, visas, security, and convoy protection; and facilitate UNAMID deployment and resupply by air, rail, and road. I welcome the agreement reached in these areas on 7 October in Khartoum by the Tripartite Committee on UNAMID. I count on the Government of the Sudan to ensure its implementation at all levels of Government, both local and national, including the agreement it subsequently reached with Under-Secretary-General Le Roy to complete implementation of the agreement on white helicopters within two weeks of the agreement.

78. The capacity of UNAMID to carry out its mandate is also dependent on the resources that Member States provide. I once again call on those who are in a position to provide missing units, namely a multi-role logistics unit, a medium transport unit, a heavy transport unit, an aerial reconnaissance unit, 6 light tactical

helicopters, and 18 medium-utility helicopters, to do so immediately. These are critical assets to ensure the mobility of UNAMID personnel, who are mandated to protect the people of Darfur, and who are increasingly under threat themselves. It is the responsibility of Member States to equip the mission and empower it to perform the task entrusted to it by the Security Council.

79. It is unclear what impact the 14 July application by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court for an arrest warrant against President Omar Al-Bashir will have on peace and security in Darfur and in the Sudan. The International Criminal Court is an independent judicial institution, and the activities of the Prosecutor and the Court are distinct from the ongoing humanitarian, peacekeeping, and mediation efforts in Darfur and South Sudan. I reiterate my call to the international community to reach agreement on the importance of both peace and justice for the sustainable resolution of the crisis in Darfur — and to be united in its support for the parties to reach a political solution.